



Bipartisan Physicians for Underserved Areas Act

Introduced by Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV) and Rep. David McKinley (R-WV)

The need:

- **America is facing a doctor shortage crisis.** The U.S. is estimated to see a **shortage of up to 124,000 physicians by 2034**, including shortfalls in both primary and specialty care. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened this crisis.ⁱ
- Over 83 million Americans live in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).ⁱⁱ **All 17 counties in Nevada have some type of HPSA designation.**ⁱⁱⁱ
- Despite having **three medical schools and six teaching hospitals**,^{iv} Nevada ranks **48th in the country for primary care physicians per capita.**^v

What is Graduate Medical Education?

- In the U.S., medical school graduates must complete a residency program, also known as **graduate medical education (GME)**, to become a practicing doctor. The federal government (Medicare) is the primary source of funding that pays for medical residencies, or **GME slots**, to train doctors in the U.S.^{vi}
- For decades, **an arbitrary cap on the number of federally-funded GME slots per teaching hospital** has limited the expansion of residency training programs, even as medical school enrollment has grown in many states, including Nevada.
- **Doctors are more likely to practice in the same state where they did their residency.** More than half of those who completed residency from 2011-2020 are practicing in the state where they did their residency.^{vii}
- Nevada, like many other states, **graduates more medical students each year than there are GME slots** in Nevada. This means that **some medical students who might be inclined to stay in Nevada for residency may not be able to do so** due to a lack of GME slots, and are thus forced to leave the state for residency.
- Prior to the enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010, if a teaching hospital closed, its GME slots would be "lost," because slots are associated with each hospital. Recognizing our nation's GME slot shortage, **the ACA required GME slots in cases of hospital closure to be redistributed** to other training hospitals, prioritizing hospitals located in the same geographic area. However, **currently there is no requirement to prioritize areas with disproportionately severe doctor shortages** when redistributing those valuable slots.^{viii}

What this bill does:

- This bill would revise the federal GME process to give residency programs in areas with severe physician shortages a greater chance of gaining GME slots that become available when another resident-training hospital closes.

- The legislation also would continue to prioritize keeping medical residency slots local and within the same state when hospitals close and would update the requirement for quickly filling GME slots.
- More specifically, this bill updates the process for reallocation of GME slots following a hospital closure to ensure they are preserved in a more equitable way by:
 - Updating the process to give residency programs in areas with physician shortages a greater priority in gaining GME slots from hospital closures, while still retaining existing provisions ensuring that local geographic area and within the same state remain priority criteria. No state willing to use GME slots from a closure within their state will lose them to another state.
 - The bill also updates the requirement for timely filling of slots from within 3 years to starting to fill within two years and fully within five years. This incentivizes slots to be filled (and doctors trained) quicker, and brings the full timeline of five years in-line with recent GME slot increases (also improving access for programs such as general surgery, which take five years).

Support from Doctors, Medical Schools, and Health Care Professionals:

- "Nevada continues to struggle with statewide physician workforce shortages. This important bill will support efforts by medical schools and teaching hospitals across the state to **expand graduate medical education opportunities to train tomorrow's doctors.**"
 - *Dr. John Packham, PhD, Associate Dean, University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine*
- "Roseman University College of Medicine is dedicated to **retaining the medical professionals we train here at home in the Las Vegas valley** and GME modernization is an important part of that mission. We thank Congresswoman Lee for engaging with us and the rest of the medical training community in the creation of this bill and look forward to a continued partnership in modernizing the GME program to fit our area's needs."
 - *Dr. Pedro "Joe" Greer, MD, Dean, Roseman College of Medicine*
- "**We are excited about this proposed legislation as it will help to relieve the physician shortage found in Nevada.** It is well known that physicians are most likely to practice where they have completed their training, especially if they have attended medical school in the same state. Nevada has significant shortages in nearly every physician specialty and we are woefully underfunded for residency positions compared to most other states. Any effort to decrease this disparity is greatly needed for our community."
 - *Dr. Marc J. Kahn, MD, Dean, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine*

- "It has been an honor and a privilege working alongside some of Nevada's finest leaders in Undergraduate and Graduate Medical Education. **We appreciate Congresswoman Lee's work to expand medical residency training programs in Nevada.** As we continue to address healthcare access and disparity, including the alarming rate of physician shortage across our great state, we are committed to doing our part to give back to the communities we serve."
 - *Dr. Angelina Rodriguez, MD, Family Medicine Program Director at Southern Hills Hospital and Medical Center*
- "It is paramount that we create more opportunities in physician education and training so that we can retain and continue building the much needed physician workforce for Nevada. This bill as introduced by Representative Lee and Senator Rosen **will go a long way in creating and filling important residency training positions in Nevada.**"
 - *Dr. Wolfgang Gilliar, DO, Dean, Tuoro University Nevada College of Osteopathic Medicine*
- "The Nevada Primary Care Association, representing the state's Community Health Centers, is grateful to Congresswoman Lee for introducing this important legislation. Nevada has been blessed with rapid population growth throughout its modern history, but this has come at a cost of persistent and profound health provider shortages. **The Physicians for Underserved Areas Act is an important step to increasing the number of providers who are trained in the state and stay** to deliver health care to our residents."
 - *Nancy Bowen, CEO of the Nevada Primary Care Association*

Senate companion bill led by Senators Jacky Rosen (D-NV) & John Boozman (R-AR).

For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Lauren Toy with Rep. Lee's office at lauren.toy@mail.house.gov.

ⁱ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/aamc-report-reinforces-mounting-physician-shortage>
ⁱⁱ <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?selectedRows=%7B%22states%22:%7B%22nevada%22:%7B%7D%7D,%22wrapups%22:%7B%22united-states%22:%7B%7D%7D%7D&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>
ⁱⁱⁱ https://dphh.nv.gov/Programs/HPSA/Health_Professional_Shortage_Area_Designations_-_Home/
^{iv} <https://www.aamc.org/advocacy-policy/state-state-graduate-medical-education-data>
^v https://store.aamc.org/downloadable/download/sample/sample_id/305/
^{vi} <https://www.crs.gov/Reports/R44376?source=search&qid=267ffe98e17e4ab6be7e0f82198325c6&index=1>
^{vii} <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/students-residents/data/report-residents/2021/executive-summary>
^{viii} <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-Fee-for-Service-Payment/AcuteInpatientPPS/DGME>